

Panel 71 Website Summary

I think it goes without saying that this panel has been quite an experience, with the challenges and solutions presented by the onset of Covid 19 setting the tone for day. It was an experience not to be missed, seeing how we were suddenly rocketed into the virtual world and how the fellowship and the Area Committee rose to the occasion with the pandemic rapidly overtaking the normal circumstances of daily life while staying sober and connected and maintaining the service structure that helps the hand of AA to reach the still suffering alcoholic. I count myself fortunate to have been involved in this experience alongside you and have really felt the sense of the service family connection grow for me this panel. Those of us in General Service had little choice if we wanted to continue but to embrace the virtual meeting world and its conveniences and shortcomings as best we could. Not all have been willing to roll with these changes, we have seen area attendance decline despite the ease of attending online meetings, and my homegroup was one that slowly dwindled away until there was not enough member left willing to keep its virtual doors open until we could get the physical ones unlocked once more.

It seems trying move into the next phase of this new world is even more challenging as we have faced the complexities and frustration of the hybrid meeting format finally get to relax in the joy of now meeting completely face to face for the first time although uncertainty lies ahead. We have already shown there is enough willingness to meet whatever challenge lies ahead and have some fun along the way, but I need to also acknowledge the unavoidable emotional, mental and spiritual fatigue and hangover resulting from the isolation and slow grind of the past two plus years. I cannot say enough of how being involved in service has helped lessen the impact and get me through the pandemic times.

I started a bit early as Webmaster while wrapping up last panel as the Corrections Chair, as help was needed to get the website back online after a suspension and restored to better functionality. I was grateful for and enjoyed the opportunity and had fun reworking the site and working with fellow area members to help develop the website to best suit our needs and it remains a continual work in progress as our needs continue grow and change. I also enjoyed learning all the aspects of managing the WordPress site, the domain & website hosting and Google Workspace Gmail and Google Drive and developing a system to quickly & efficiently perform ongoing tasks and request. This position offers a lot of quick gratification with the ongoing submittals for posting; a few clicks of the mouse and a quick reply with a smiley face leads to quick responses of gratitude from my fellows, greatly appreciated especially during the recent period of isolation. The Website Standing Committee description also says that technical training and services are provided as needed, however I somehow managed to avoid being involved in any of the virtual and hybrid meeting responsibilities. I look forward to helping the transition to the next willing trusted servant and will be available for as much assistance as needed during the process.

I do have a recommendation for the committee that I have not gotten around to submitting anything for. The Website Guidelines may not serve us well anymore as currently

written and are likely due for a review and update. I did form a Website Committee as outlined, with an Alternate Webmaster and 3 other members and we met once to discuss the layout of the website, but we have not met since then. Due to the technical skills and the knowledge needed to maintain the website and domain hosting and email environment, I do think having an alternate trained and ready to step in if needed and available to help with some of the maintenance as needed is a good idea. As for the rest of the committee, perhaps a Technical Services Committee or the like to help anticipate and oversee our growing tech needs would serve us better to provide consistency and remove any burden of technical services management from the Officers already tasked with overseeing our meetings and any need for host districts to provide technical expertise.

I will finish by saying that General Service has been vital part of my growth in sobriety; I did not play well with others when I got here and desperately needed this environment beyond the ease of just going to meetings where I could bump up against other AA's, helping to knock the chips off each other's shoulders and learn about commitment, trusting the process and being part of a greater voice. I got involved hoping to become popular and important but stayed to continue to get over and beyond myself and reach that sacred common ground that we find together, often after sometimes excruciatingly slow deliberation, debate and disagreement. I hope you those of you newer to General Service find your own life inspiring and life changing experience here and stay to learn and grow and join us in this ever-changing service journey.

In Love & Service,
Sean C, Area 17 Website Standing Committee Chair